

Search for a new School boss head of the class search begins

By JUSTIN GRAEBER, CLIPPER EDITOR
JUSTIN@DUXBURYCLIPPER.COM

The School Committee has little time to waste if they're going to have a new superintendent in place by the next school year.

Susan Skeiber informed the board at its Jan. 6 meeting that she would be leaving Duxbury at the end of the school year and says she has no concrete plans for the future. She has offered to help out with the search for the next superintendent.

The committee called a special meeting on Wednesday to get the search process rolling.

Luckily, some of the work has already been done. When Skeiber was hired in 2007, a firm was hired and an extensive, nation-wide search was undertaken, including input from the community. The School Committee is hoping some of that information can be used to facilitate this search.

Anne Ward said the committee spent \$4,000 on the search last time.

"That's probably gone up," she said.

In 2007, the school tapped the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and consultant Jim Hardy, a former school committee member himself, to lead the search.

MASC is one of the options the committee is considering this time around, along with the New England School Development Council. Skeiber pointed out that because Duxbury pays dues to both these organizations, there would be some cost savings if either were hired as a consultant.

Committee members agreed that a great deal of the information used during the last search can be revisited.

"We don't want to re-invent the wheel," said Maureen Connolly.

However, Connolly said she wanted to do due diligence on other search options.

"Before we decide on one firm, I would like to listen to at least a couple of other firms and see what they have to say," she said. "I would like to have a choice."

George Cipolletti said that he would be happy to have Skeiber prepare a request for proposal, but cautioned that firms more connected to education may be a better fit.

"Private industry didn't seem to have the network in place ... to get the pool we're looking for," he said of the last search.

School Committee Vice Chairman John Heinstadt countered that a private firm might be more likely to find an outside the box candidate. He pointed to former Duxbury School Committee member John Tuffy, now the superintendent of Silver Lake, who came from a banking rather than an education background.

"If the pool is shallow ... maybe you want to get someone who wouldn't typically be considered in the pool," Heinstadt said.

Connolly pointed out that there are residents with corporate recruiting experience that may be able to aid the search process. However, she cautioned that the school board shouldn't rely too heavily on the professionals.

"It's our responsibility to hire the superintendent," she said. "I don't want to abdicate it all to a search firm."

Cipolletti said no matter who conducts the search, many of the applicants will be the same.

"The trick is going to be finding the best match and convincing the person we're the best choice for them," he said.

The board also discussed the composition of the search committee that would aid the professionals in selecting the next superintendent. There seemed to be consensus that in 2007, the group was too large. Connolly expressed a desire to keep the committee under 10 this time around, but stressed the importance of including residents.

"In this community people value education," she said. "I think it's important they have a strong voice, that they can be constructively involved in the process."

Cipolletti talked about hosting at least one community forum to get input from the community at large, and Ward suggested an Internet-based survey.

Whatever direction the school system takes, time is of the essence. The board said they would like to hear from potential search firms on Feb. 3.